The Ballarat Naturalist
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FROM THE SHALLOWS TO THE DEEP END
Marine Encounters at Lady Elliot Island

Jenny and Peter Sedgwick transported the meeting from the blustery cold climes of Ballarat to the balmy tropical waters of Lady Elliot Island, 85 km north of Hervey Bay. Lady Elliot Island is a coral cay at the southernmost tip of the Great Barrier Reef, and covers an area of about 45 hectares.

Public domain outline map of Lady Elliot Island created by Inas at wts wikivoyage

Coral cays form when ocean currents carrying loose sediment across the surface of a reef slow, or converge with another current, and deposit the sediment. The sediment is composed almost entirely of skeletal remains of animals and plants from the surrounding reef. The island first emerged above sea level about 3,000 years ago. Hardened droppings from the many species of seabird that nest on the island have helped consolidate the island.

The island can only be reached by small plane, and there is a strict luggage weight limit. Jenny and Peter explained that their photos were taken with a small Olympus Tough camera, which is waterproof as well as light-weight.

A wander along the inter-tidal zone reveals many crabs, and a nocturnal Epaulettes Shark slipping between the low tide pools. Even a hunting octopus, coloured seastars and corals could be seen without getting wet.

A Day Octopus hunts in the lagoon

Slipping into the shallow lagoon a host of creatures are revealed. Coloured Sea Cucumber, clams, cowries and anemones share the

niches amongst the textural corals with turtles and colourful fish such as Butterflyfish, Angelfish, Anemonefish, Damselfish and Convict Tang.

Convict Tang gleam in the turquoise lagoon waters

On the deep side of the island turtles are sighted amongst schools of larger fish such as Couta, Batfish and Sweetlip. Here groups of Bigfin Squid and three types of turtles live amongst the blue tones of the deeper sea, and schools of small Chromis flash from green to blue.

Further out is found a Manta Ray “cleaning station”. A cleaning station develops where there are rocks or coral protuberances that provide ideal habitat for wrasses, small territorial fish that live on the parasites found on larger fish such as rays and sharks. The manta rays visit the cleaning station, swimming slowly as clouds of wrasses remove parasites from their skin, gills, and even the inside of their mouths.

This Manta Ray shows injuries from encounters with a shark and fishing gear

Towards the cleaning station, various rays and small sharks round out the species list.

Photos and text by Jenny and Peter Sedgwick.

Editor's Note: For anyone interested, there is an iNaturalist Project for the island:
https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lady-elliot-island

FUNGI AT BLACKWOOD
Report by Les Hanrahan

The weather was fine for our rescheduled fungi excursion near the Garden of St. Erth, Blackwood. The 60mm of rain last weekend was welcomed by farmers, gardeners and fungi enthusiasts after below average rain this year. April and May rainfall was about a third of the average. This has resulted in a slow start to the fungi season with less species seen so far. The season, moisture and temperature are important factors influencing fungi fruit bodies' appearance. We saw a lot of species downhill from the Garden of St Erth along the Whipstick Loop near Back Creek. The vegetation included manna gums, messmates, blackwoods, with daisy bushes, tree ferns and other ferns, liverworts and lichens.

Angela found the first species seen, the Wood Blewitt *Collybia nuda.* This species has lilac gills and stem below a cap surface, lilac when young turning to light brown when older. A group of Fly Agarics *Amanita muscaria* was near pine trees. All growth stages were present, from the bright red enclosed caps with the white spot remnants of the universal veil, to older orange specimens that no longer had white spots. These two exotic species now have a worldwide distribution.

The most common fungus on wood was Brown Tufts *Hypholoma brunneum*. (Photo at right by Vireya.) The caps of this fungus when immature have white scales like 'stitching' near the margin that disappear later. On some logs were lines of the conical orange-red caps of immature Brick Tufts *Hypholoma australianum* species. The yellow Sulphur Tufts *Hypholoma fasciculare* have greenish-yellow gills darkening to grey later.

Coral fungi were scarce. There were some Pretty Horn *Calocera sinensis* on logs and Jelly Bells *Heterotextus peziziformis* on small branches. *Macrotyphula juncea* is a white thread-like species only 2mm wide and up to 80mm tall on litter and small twigs. Mycenas seen included the Tall Mycena *M. cystidiosa*, the Yellow-stemmed *Mycena epipterygia* and the blue Pixie's Parasol *Mycena interrupta*. There were lots of tiny white capped fungi on leaf litter including Mycena species and the Horse-hair fungus *Marasmius crinis-equi*. Another Marasmius species seen was the red-brown velvety capped *Marasmius elegans*. This robust species has a two-toned stem, white above and red brown below.

In one spot was a group of *Singerocybe clitocyboides*. This species has funnel-shaped caps with a waxy appearance and the gills are decurrent.

Singerocybe clitocyboides by Vireya

Among the leather type fungi on the side and end of logs were the wrinkled *Stereum rugosum*, the golden *Stereum versicolor*, *Xylobolus illudens (Stereum illudens)* and *Trametes versicolor.* One puffball species seen was the brownish-white pear-shaped *Lycoperdon pyriforme*. The Buttery Collybia *Rhodocollybia butyracea* has a smooth greasy brown cap about 50mm wide on a stout stem up to 80mm tall. One ink-cap species seen was *Coprinopsis atramentaria*. This dark gilled specimen had a conical grey-brown cap about 25mm wide on a tall stem about 100mm.

After lunch we made our way towards the track above the Lerderderg River. We noticed on the way some *Austropaxillus infundibuliformis*. This yellow species has a deeply funneled shape when mature and the decurrent gills are forked. This species is often seen along roadsides earlier in the fungi season.

Austropaxillus infundibuliformis by Angela

Masses of white Ping-pong Bats *Dictyopanus pusillus (Panellus pusillus)* were along several fallen logs. The small somewhat kidney-shaped caps are attached to the log with a tiny lateral stem. The under surface has tiny pores about 0.3mm wide. One Rooting Shank *Oudemansiella gigaspora* was seen. It had an almost flat brown cap about 80mm across on a tall white stem that continues underground.

Among the fallen bark of an old Manna Gum there was a half hidden group of *Leucopaxillus eucalyptorum* with masses of white mycelium under the heaped bark. On a fallen tree trunk there was the horse-hoof shaped bracket *Fomitiporia robusta* (was *Phellinus robusta*). Some *Hakea sericea* shrubs were starting to flower. Paul took us to a spot where there was a healthy clump of Clubmoss, a rare plant with an ancient lineage. We made our way back to our cars by the Lerderderg Track where some years there would be lots of *Cortinarius* species.

Pear-shaped Puffball, Apioperdon pyriforme, by Les

Turkey-Tail, Trametes versicolor, by Andy

Snow Fungus, Tremella fuciformis, by Jenny

Yellowleg Bonnet, Mycena epipterygia, by Jenny

Pixie's Parasol, Mycena interrupta, by Graeme

Uncommon Bird Sightings

Margaret saw this lyrebird on Mt Donna Buang on 29 May. “Altogether that day I saw 19 lyrebirds. The next day I heard one singing on the walk to the La La Waterfalls at Warburton.”

Carol saw these Brolgas at Lake Learmonth, “There were 2 pairs there when I was lucky enough to find them close to the shore near the pier and the old Sailing Club building. I think they had been around for at least a month according to the large number of reports on the Ballarat Birdlife Facebook page. The western district drought will have forced birds to find wetter areas.”

Excerpts from Club Meeting Minutes 6th June 2025

Opening:

Club President Neville Oddie acknowledged the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we were meeting and welcomed 20 members and one visitor attending in person, and four members attending via Zoom.

Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting on May 2, 2025

Another 20 copies of the Entomological Society of Victoria's new publication "100 Common Moths and Butterflies of Victoria" has been ordered after a strong response to a request for expressions of interest. The final cost is $6.40/ ea. If you would like a copy, please deposit this amount in to the Club's account (same bank details as per membership payments, which can be found in the latest Club newsletter) via EFT (noting your surname in the reference) or bring the correct cash to the meeting and find Kathy.

The responses to the Club's submission opposing Victoria's duck-shooting season which was sent to the State Premier, Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, the State Minister for Environment, Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP, and the Federal Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP were essentially no response other than thanks for taking the time to write to them. Neville is drafting a follow-up letter to reiterate the concerns, dismay and objections of Club members, with the aim of bringing it before the members at the July Club Meeting for discussion and hopefully approval.

The nomination of Roger Thomas for the Australian Natural History Medallion is progressing, with the deadline for submission being June 30. Please contact Emily if you have any information

about Roger's contributions to natural history over the last 10 years or would like to be involved in gathering supporting information and writing it up.

Copies of Susan Kruss's PhD had kindly been picked up from the printers by Max and were eagerly taken home tonight by those who ordered a copy.

Business Arising from Correspondence

Membership applications for consideration and formal approval have been received from Kate Redwood, Jenny West and Victoria & Gary Lovejoy. After Kate and Jenny gave us a brief overview of their interest in natural history and we learned a little about Victoria and Gary from Emily, their membership applications were formally accepted.

Sheree and Emily noted that the information promoting our Club on the Victorian Environment Friends Network website is almost ready to be uploaded, as diligently collated by Sheree. A few sentences will be added about eminent naturalists and significant events in the earlier iterations of the Club (1952), along with some photos of field nat's in action.

SEANA Spring Camp 2025 Update

Neville, Kathy and Emily from the Organising Committee gave a quick update, with registrations now rolling in after the Registration Form and First Circular was emailed out to all SEANA-affiliated Clubs and over 200 field naturalists who have attended recent camps. Field trip leaders: please start working on a precis of your field trip for the Second Circular, as per an email sent earlier this week, and send it through to Kathy by the first week of August.

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

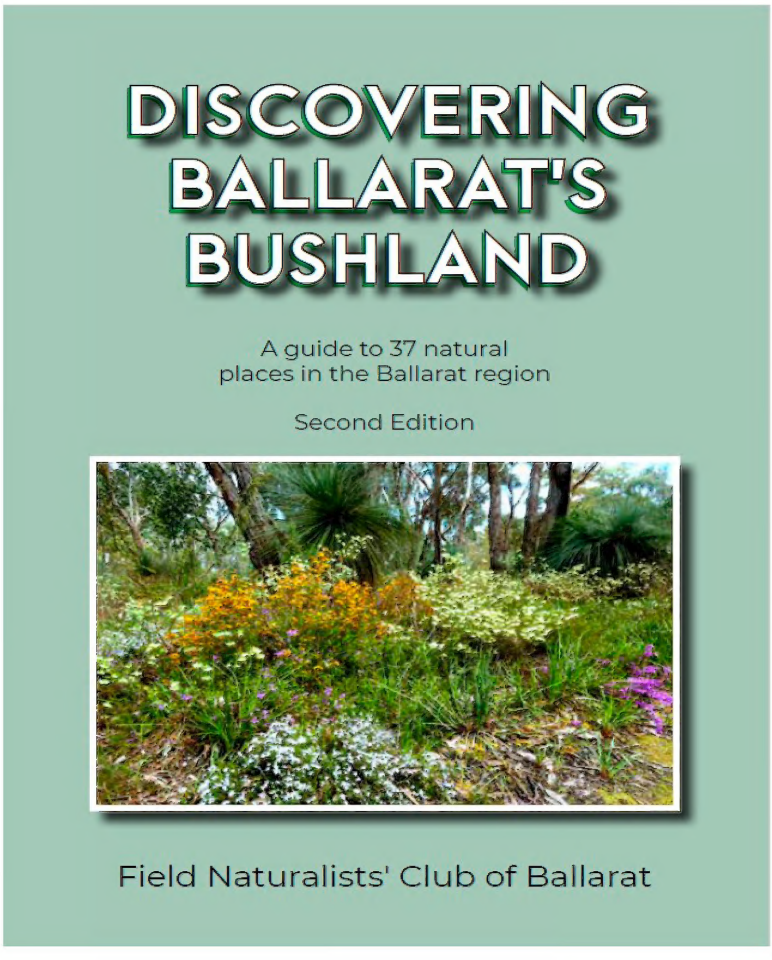
Carol let us know of her good fortune to find four Brolga near the pier at Lake Learmonth when she visited with a friend recently. They provided an excellent opportunity for photography. [See one of Carol's photos earlier in this newsletter.]

Adding to the topic of Brolga, Judith gave us an insight into some wisdom of traditional owners: the life cycle of the Brolga is generally synchronised with the Autumn rise and Spring set of Magellanic clouds. If they aren't synchronised, drought conditions are indicated.

Andy walked from Mt Donna Buang, over Mt Boobyalla to the Acheron Way in Warburton and was delighted and amazed to see a dozen lyrebirds during the walk along recently opened pathways through what was previously closed water catchment.

Emily mentioned a petition provided by member Roy Pails, lobbying the State Government to expedite the approval of fauna-related licences required to run "Sunset Sanctuary" in Berringa after two years of uncertainty and delays. Members were invited to sign if they wished.

Sheree brought along a long (35cm+), perfectly-formed *Eucalyptus bicostata* leaf that she'd collected in Barkley whilst out exploring, and noted that the longest recorded leaf of that species is a whopping 82.5cm, from a tree growing near Mt Beauty.



Discovering Ballarat's Bushland book sales

Books can be purchased from our Treasurer Kathy

We have also secured the help of some local outlets to sell the book. They include:- Collins Books, Lydiard St & Bridge Mall, Tourist Info Centre Sturt Street, Eureka Centre Gift Shop, Buninyong Tourist Info centre

FNCB members $10
Other FNC Members $12
Retail $15

Ballarat SEANA Spring Camp 17-19th Oct 2025 We are currently recruiting leaders for our excursions. The first circular and registration forms were sent out in May.

Our next club meeting is July 4th at 7.30 pm in person and via zoom.
Our guest speaker will be Angela Aldred, on *Wildlife and Landscapes of Canada*.
Carol has offered to write a report for the newsletter.

SATURDAY 5th July - Fungi Foray led by Emily Noble

Saturday 5th July (**not Sunday**), 9.30am - 4pm: "Fungi Foray at Korweinguboora, Moorabool Reservoir & Mollongghip" to be led by Emily Noble. To carpool or convoy, meet at the Federation University carpark on the corner of Gillies St and Gregory St, Wendouree for departure at 9.30am sharp. Alternatively, you can join us at the junction of the Spargo-Blakeville Rd and Ballan-Daylesford Rd at about 10.00am. Before lunch, we will be near Cairns Road, Korweinguboora. We will have lunch at about 12.30pm at the Moorabool Reservoir (toilets are available). After lunch, we will travel to Slaters Road, Mollongghip.

Wear weather-appropriate clothes and clean, sturdy shoes. Bring water, camera, small mirror, field guides, morning tea, lunch, thermos and camp chair. N.B.: Please bring a cash contribution for your driver if you intend to carpool.

A volunteer is needed to write up this field trip. Please contact Emily to volunteer.

Meetings and Excursions

July Events

Fri July 4th Angela Aldred *Wildlife and Landscapes of Canada*

Sat July 5th *Fungi Foray at Korweinguboora, Moorabool Reservoir & Mollongghip to be led by Emily Noble*

Future events

Fri August 1st Stuart Porteous *Perceptions of Yolgnu relations with Country: Insights from 21 Years in Arnham Land*

Sun Aug 3rd *Brisbane Ranges*

Volunteers are needed to write up these events for our newsletter please.

Next Committee meeting Tues July 22nd at 7.30 pm on zoom

Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at 7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree).

Committee

President	Neville Oddie
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
Committee	Andy Arnold
	Val Hocking
	Sheree Cartledge
	Max Thompson
	Alasdair Wardle
	Sue Grey-Smith

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Treasurer: Kathy Elder

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Meetings - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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